



# Sennebec Dam Removal

Union, Maine

## Highlight: St. George River

The St. George River, located in central Maine, flows through Knox and Waldo Counties with a drainage area of 440 square miles. Historically, the river supported important anadromous fish runs for fish such as Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*), blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*), American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), and American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*).

However, with construction of the Sennebec Dam in Union, Maine in 1916, fish passage to over half the watershed was blocked, eliminating a significant amount of nursery and spawning area for anadromous fish. The dam, originally constructed as part of a hydroelectric facility, was sold in the 1960's to the Sennebec Pond Association, who has since used it solely to maintain lake levels in Sennebec Pond, just upriver from the dam site. Today, the St. George River still hosts a significant alewife run, which supports a local commercial fishery, supplies lobster bait, and provides forage for many birds and sportfish including striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*), and largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*).

At the end of the 20th century, Sennebec Dam represented the last man-made barrier for anadromous fish on the St. George River. So the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program and Trout Unlimited took the lead to remove Sennebec Dam and restore anadromous fish passage on the St. George River.



Sennebec Pond, a naturally occurring lake behind the dam, is an important area for recreational swimming, boating, and fishing for the local community, so care was taken to maintain lake levels. The 12-foot high, 200-foot wide dam was removed in 2002, and replaced with a rock fish ramp 2000 feet upstream at the pond's natural outlet. The rock fish ramp recreates natural riffles and pools for fish help them swim upstream. Removing the dam also provided greater safety from potential flooding.

With the removal of Sennebec Dam, fish can now access 17 additional upstream miles of the St. George River as well as 1100 acres of lake habitat in Sennebec Pond and Quantabacook Lake. Over a quarter mile of impounded river was also restored to natural riverine conditions. The total cost of this project was \$270,000.

## GOAL

**Restore  
anadromous fish  
runs of Atlantic  
salmon, alewife,  
blueback herring,  
American eel, and  
American shad**

## CONTACT

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**National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration**

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Since the removal of the dam and creation of the rock ramp, alewife, smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), and brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) have been observed swimming successfully upstream over the ramp and into Sennebec Pond. Water levels at Sennebec Pond have been successfully maintained for recreational use. In addition, the restored section of river adds to recreational opportunities as it provides an easily-accessible white water run for canoeists and kayakers during spring high water. It has also become a popular angling area for brown trout.



Construction of the roughened ramp



Dam removal complete



## PROJECT PARTNERS:

- |                                    |   |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| ■ American Rivers                  | ■ Maine Department of Marine Resources  | ■ St. George Chapter, Trout Unlimited |
| ■ Coastal Conservation Association | ■ Maine Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline) | ■ Sennebec Pond Association           |
| ■ FishAmerica Foundation           | ■ National Fish and Wildlife Foundation   | ■ US Fish and Wildlife Service        |
| ■ Gulf of Maine Council            | ■ Natural Resources Conservation Service  | ■ Jack Tibbetts                       |
| ■ Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission | ■ River Rehab, Inc.   | ■ Ed Collins                          |